

**STATEMENT  
OF  
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE  
CHAIRMAN  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
BEFORE THE  
JULY 30, 2002 HEARING  
ON THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR/TRIBAL TRUST FUND  
REFORM TASK FORCE DIALOGUE**

The Committee on Indian Affairs meets this morning to receive testimony on the recommendations of the Department of the Interior/Tribal Trust Fund Reform Task Force as they relate to the reorganization of the Department to improve the management of funds held in trust by the United States for the benefit of individual Indians and Indian tribes.

Last week, the Committee held a hearing on the Interior Department's July 2, 2002 Report to the Congress on the Historical Accounting of Individual Indian Money Accounts.

The Department's Report projects that the conduct of an historical accounting of the accounts held in trust for individual Indians will take

at least ten years and will cost at least \$2.4 billion.

Since the time the Department submitted its report, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly rejected a proposal contained in the Interior appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2003 that would have limited the accounting of individual and tribal accounts to a fifteen-year period.

In addition, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has agreed to consolidate with the class action lawsuit brought on behalf of individual Indian money account holders, the Cobell v. Norton litigation – the seven actions that have been brought by tribal governments seeking an accounting from the government of their accounts.

The Department's Report and these recent developments serve to provide further context for the recommendations that the Committee anticipates receiving today.

While we understand that a full consensus has yet to be reached on a number of matters, including the powers and authorities of an independent Commission, and the establishment of statutory standards for the administration of the United States' trust responsibility, the Committee is encouraged by the progress that has been realized thus far

and looks forward to working with the Task Force and the citizens of Indian country as we endeavor to bring long-awaited resolutions to these matters.